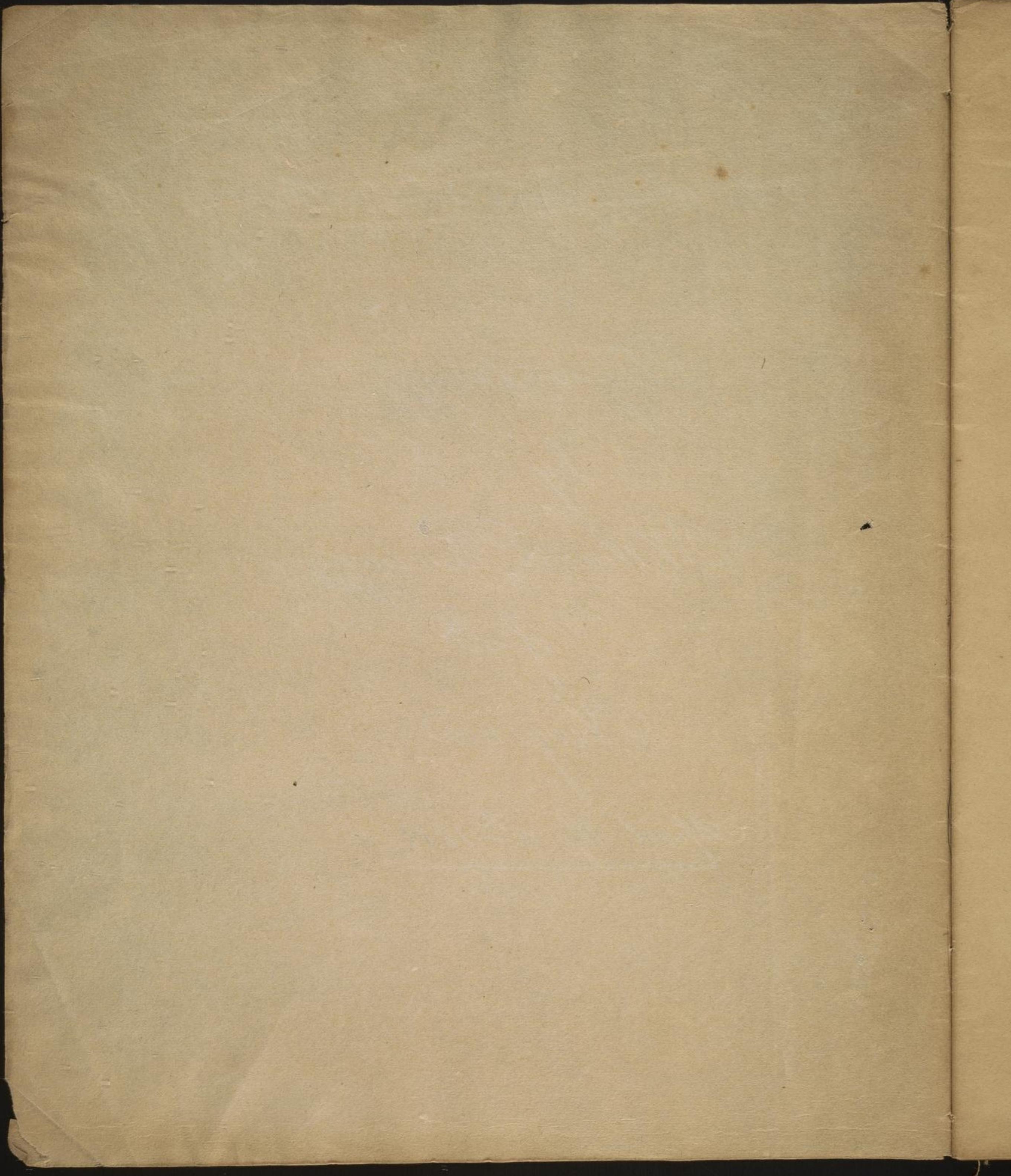


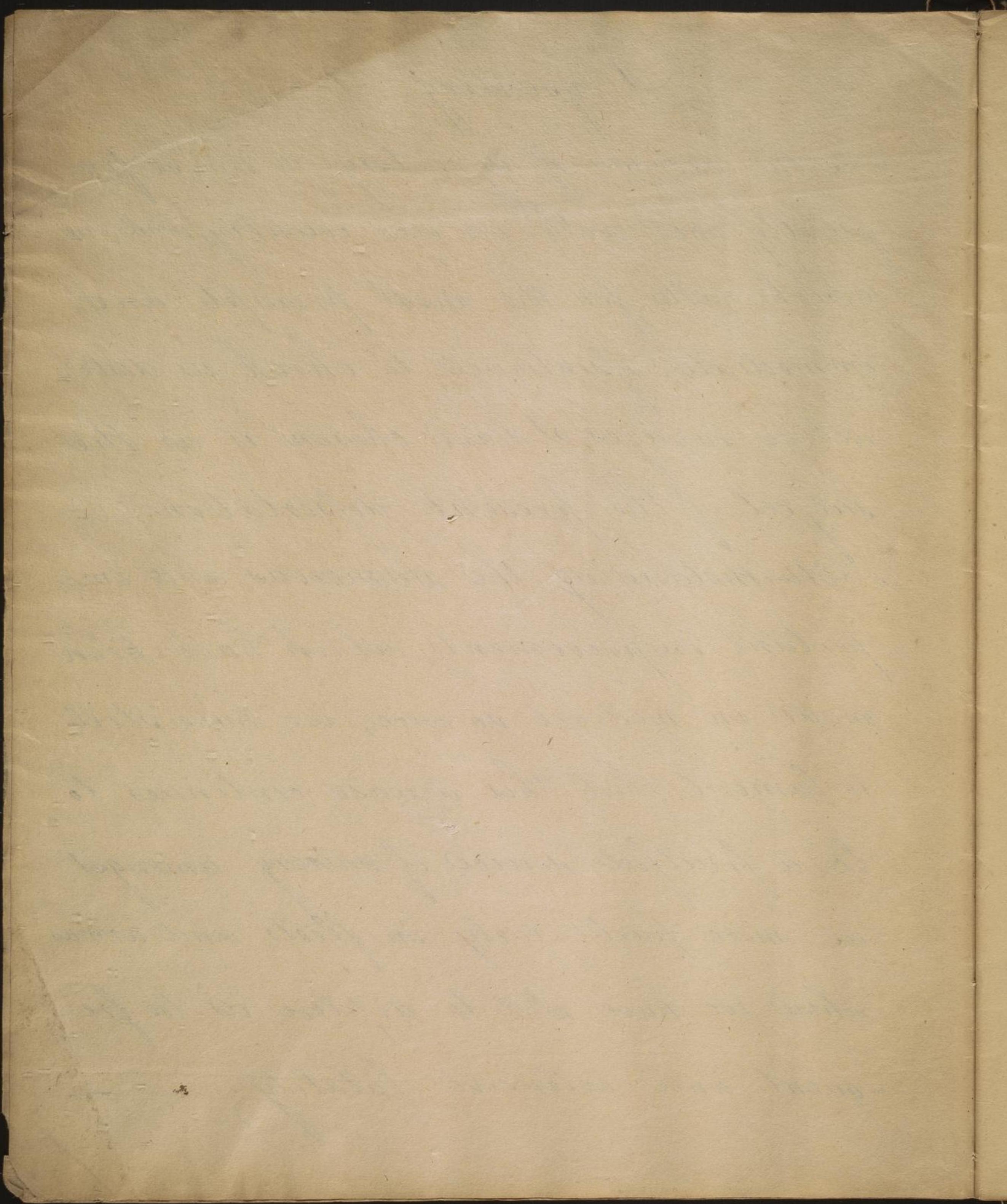
An Inaugural Dissertation
on
Dysentery
by
William Buchanan
of
Virginia

April the 5th 1811

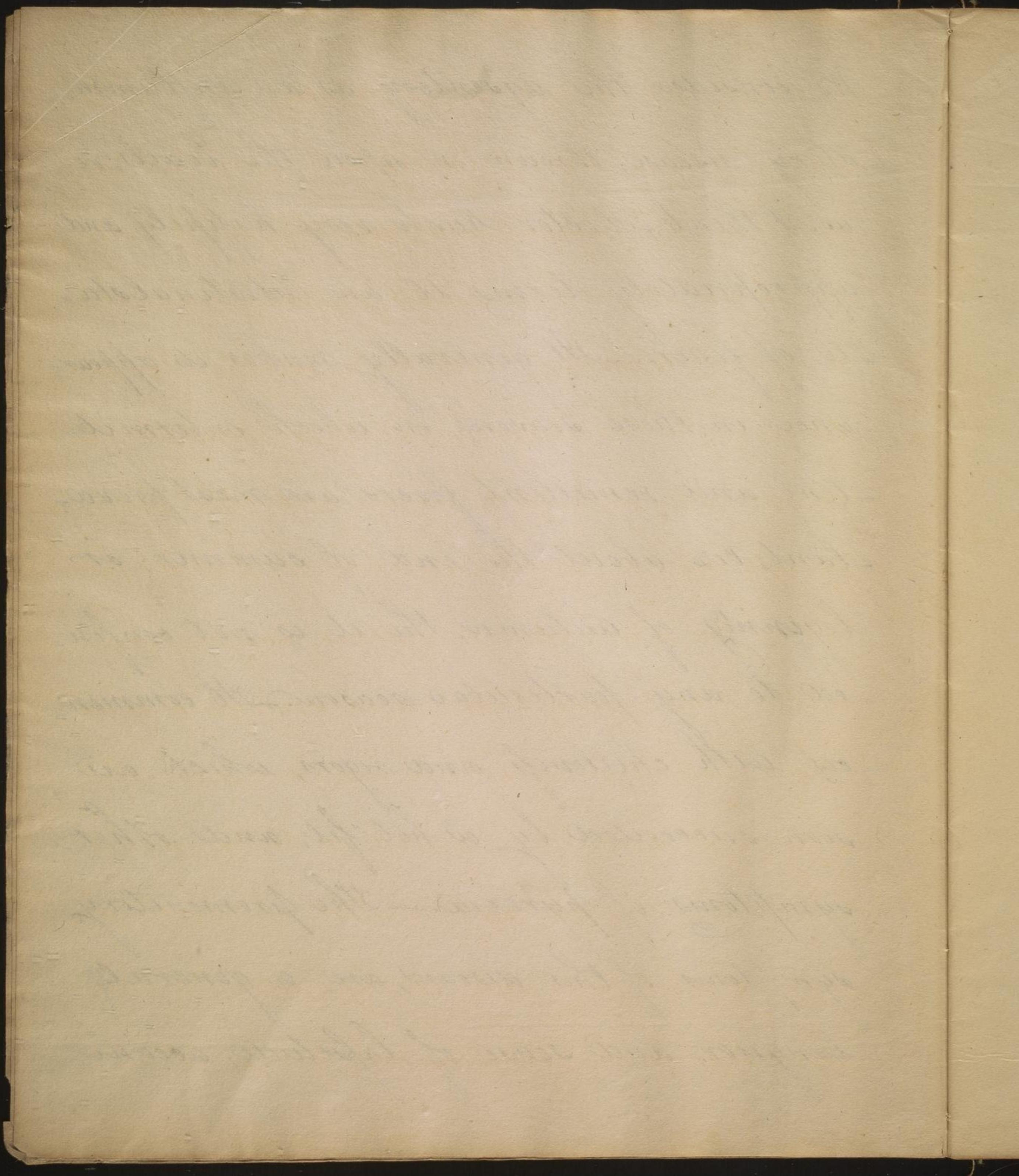


Dysentery

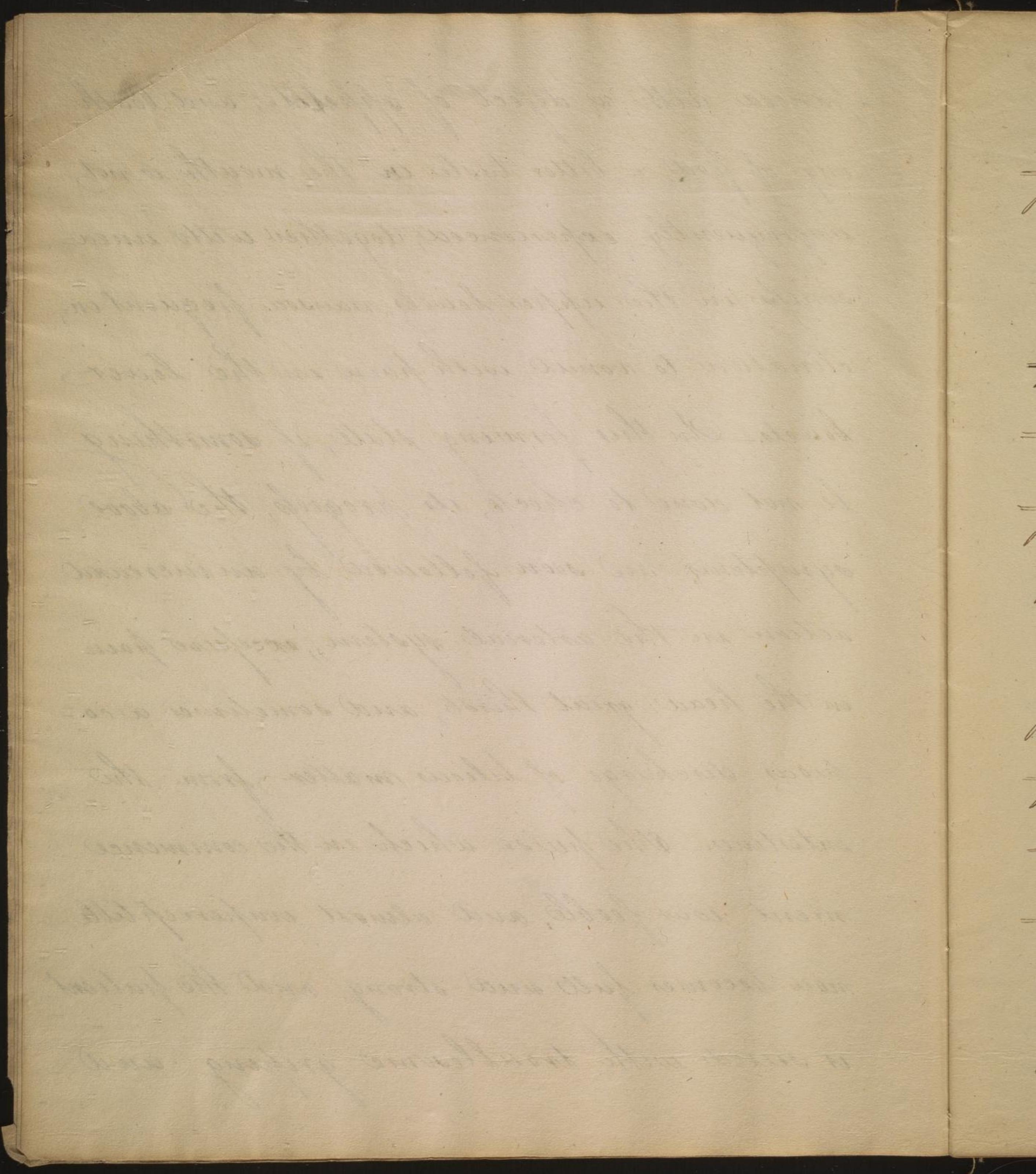
As the disease of dysentery is one, so frequently met with in our country, and one, which calls for the most prompt, and immediate assistance to check its destructive ravages; I have chosen it as the subject of the present dissertation. Notwithstanding the numerous and important improvements, which have been made in medical science, we have still to lament that this disease continues to be a fruitful source of misery amongst us; more particularly in fleets and armies where we have still to deplore its too frequent and extensive fatality.



We consider the dysentery as an inflammatory disease, thrown in upon the bowels, or as, I think, Doctor Rush very happily and appropriately terms it, an intestinal state of fever. It generally makes its appearance in those seasons, in which intermittent and remittent fevers are most prevalent; viz, about the end of summer or beginning of autumn, tho' it is not confined to any particular season. It commences with chills and rigors, which are soon succeeded by a hot fit, and other symptoms of pyrexia. The premonitory symptoms of this disease, are, a general languor, and sense of lassitude, accom-



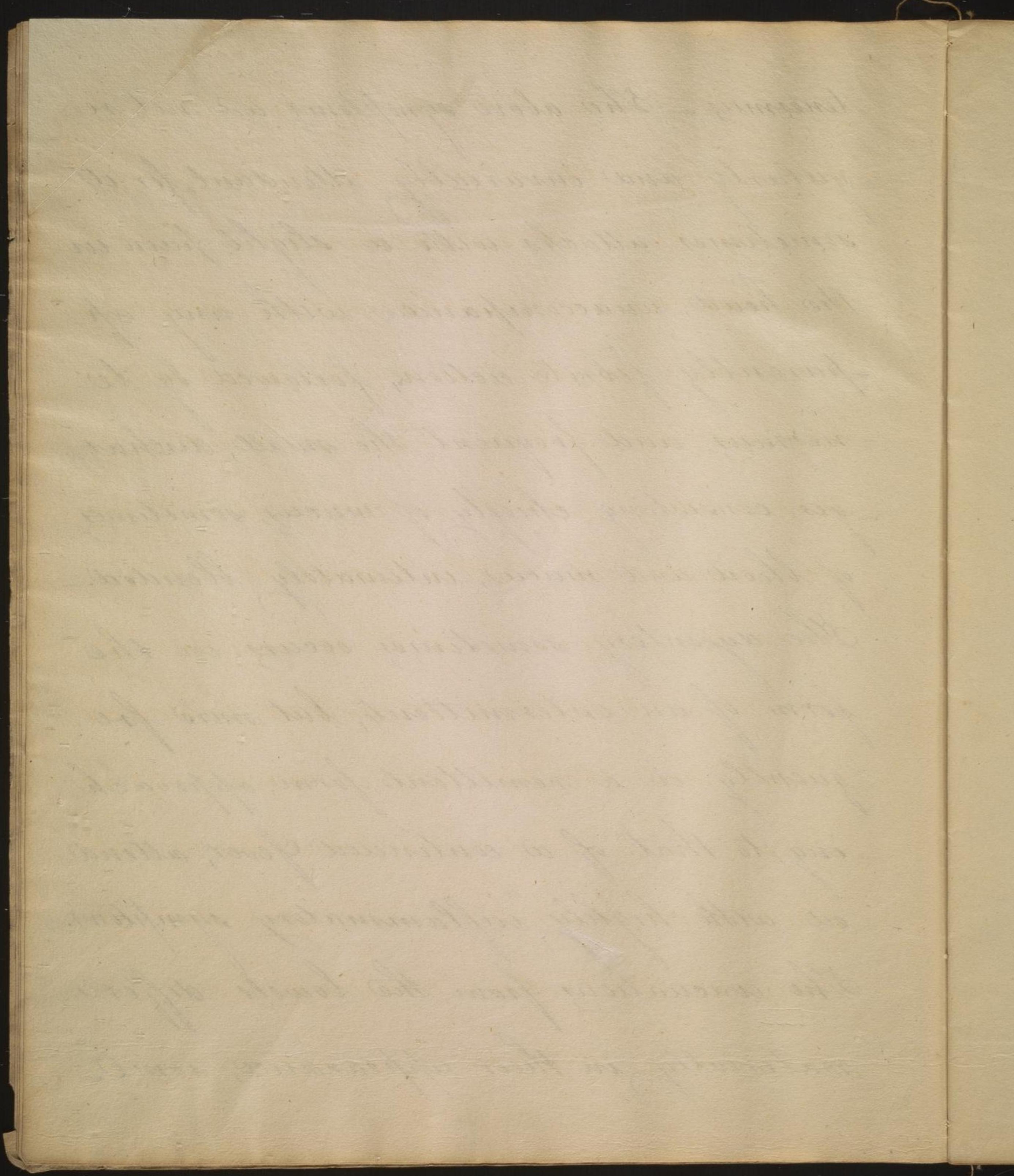
-panied with a defect of appetite, and loath-
ing of food, a bitter taste in the mouth, is not
infrequently experienced, together with uneas-
iness in the upper bowels, nausea, frequent in-
clination to vomit, with pain in the lower
bowels.—In this forming state, if something
be not done to check its progress, the above
symptoms are soon followed by an increased
action in the arterial system, excessive pain
in the head, great thirst, and sometimes a co-
-pious discharge of bilious matter from the
intestines.—The pulse which in the commence-
ment, was feeble, and almost imperceptible,
now becomes full and strong, and the patient
is seized with troublesome griping, and



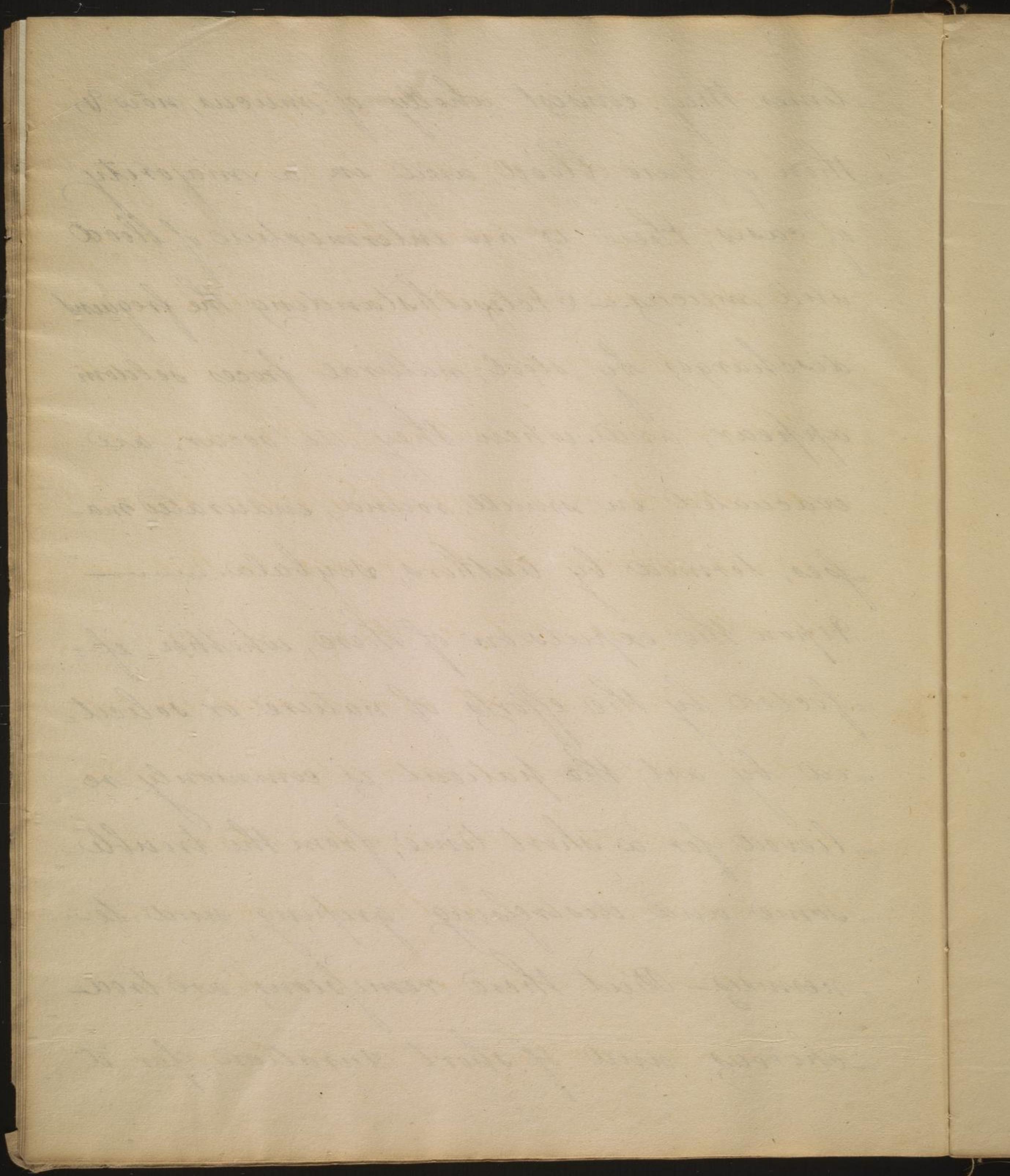
tenesmus. — The above symptoms are not regularly and invariably attendant, for it sometimes attacks with a slight pain in the head, unaccompanied with any apparently febrile action, followed by tenesmus and frequent, tho' small, discharges, consisting chiefly of mucus, sometimes of blood and mucus, intimately blended.

The dysentery sometimes occurs in the form of an intermittent, but more frequently in a remittent form, approaching to that of a continued fever, attended with highly inflammatory symptoms.

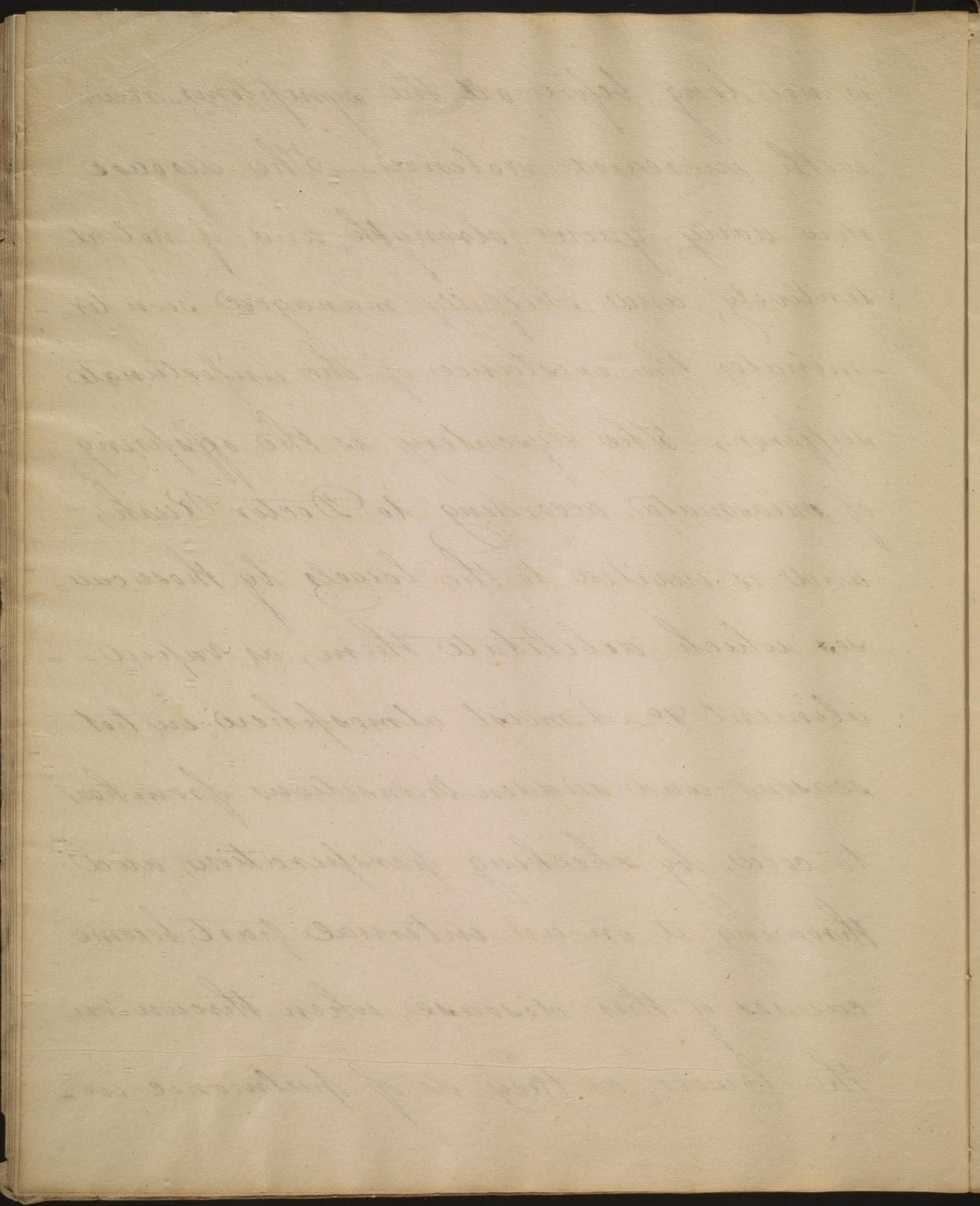
The evacuations from the bowels differs materially in their appearance, some-



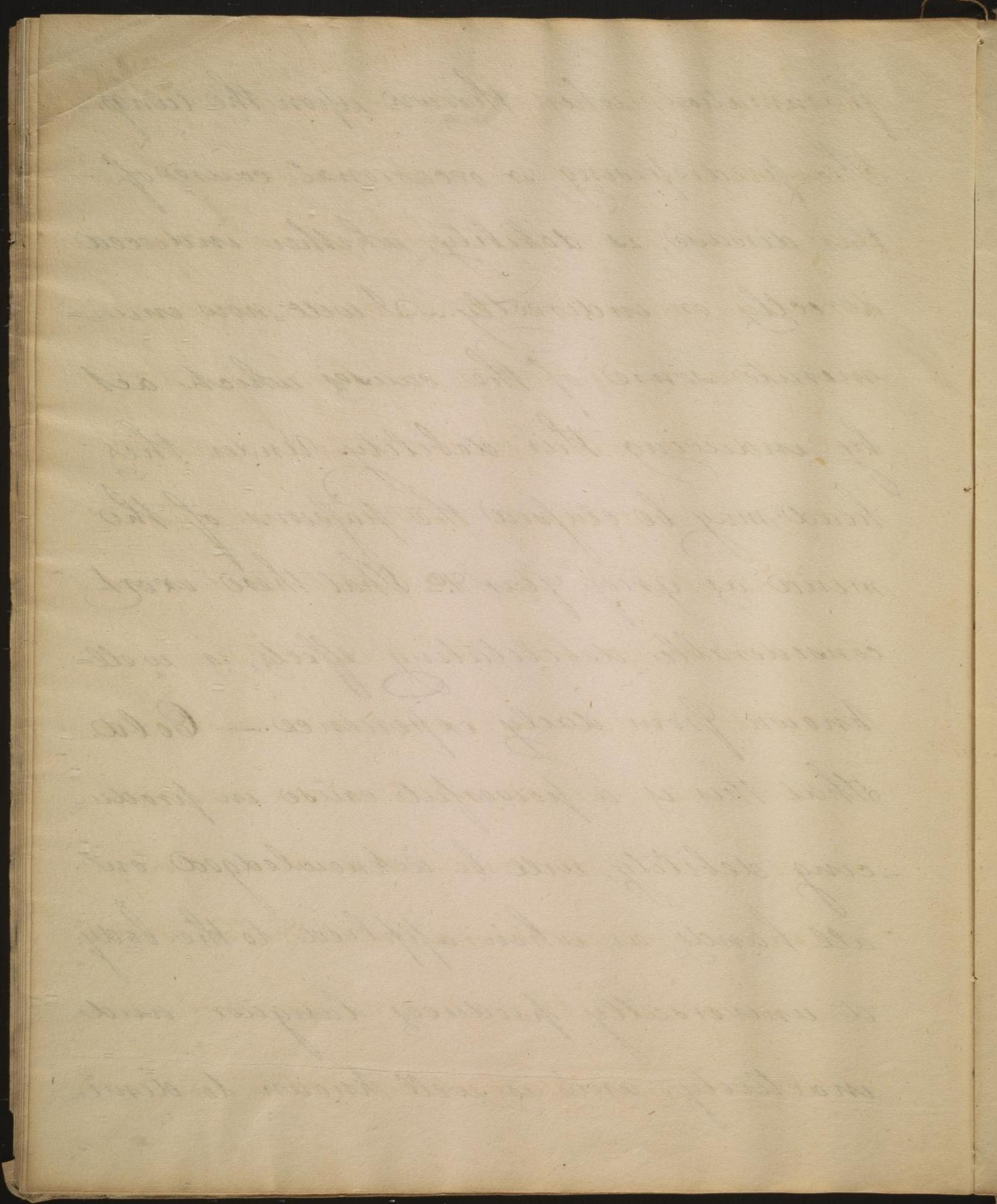
times they consist wholly of mucus, now & then of pure blood, and in a majority of cases, there is an intermixture of blood and mucus.— Notwithstanding the frequent discharges by stool, natural faeces seldom appear, and when they do occur, are evacuated in small, round, indurated masses, termed by authors, scybala. Upon the expulsion of these, whether effected by the effort of nature or solicited by art, the patient is commonly relieved for a short time, from the troublesome and distressing griping and tenesmus.— But these remissions are treacherous and of short duration, for it



is not long before all the symptoms recur
with increased violence. The disease
now daily gains strength, and if not at-
tentively and skilfully managed soon ter-
minates the existence of the unfortunate
sufferer. The dysentery is the offspring
of miasma, according to Doctor Rush,
and is invited to the bowels by those cau-
ses which debilitate them, as rapid-
aliment &c. A moist atmosphere in hot
seasons and sudden transitions from heat
to cold, by checking perspiration, and
throwing it on an internal part, become
causes of this disease, when thrown on
the bowels, as they do of pulmonic in-



-flammation, when thrown upon the lungs.—
The predisposing or occasional cause of
this disease, is debility, whether induced
directly or indirectly.—I will now enu-
merate some of the causes which act
by inducing this debility. Under this
head may be clasped the passions of the
mind as grief, fear &c. That these exert
considerable debilitating effect, is well
known from daily experience.—Cold.—
That this is a powerful cause in produ-
—ing debility, will be acknowledged on
all hands, as when applied to the body,
it universally produces languor and
inactivity, and is well known to dimi-



nish the force and frequency of the pulse...
A frequent, as well as truly lamentable ca-
use of this, as of many other violent diseases,
is, intemperance in the use of ardent spi-
rits; these when taken in large quantities
not only debilitate the whole frame, but
render it extremely excitable; consequent-
ly susceptible to the whole train of
diseases, to which the human body is
subject... Great mental or corporeal fa-
tigue, may be considered as a frequent
cause of this disease. I will now say
a few words with respect to the prox-
imate cause; the opinion taught by
Dr Cullen, is, that it consists in a

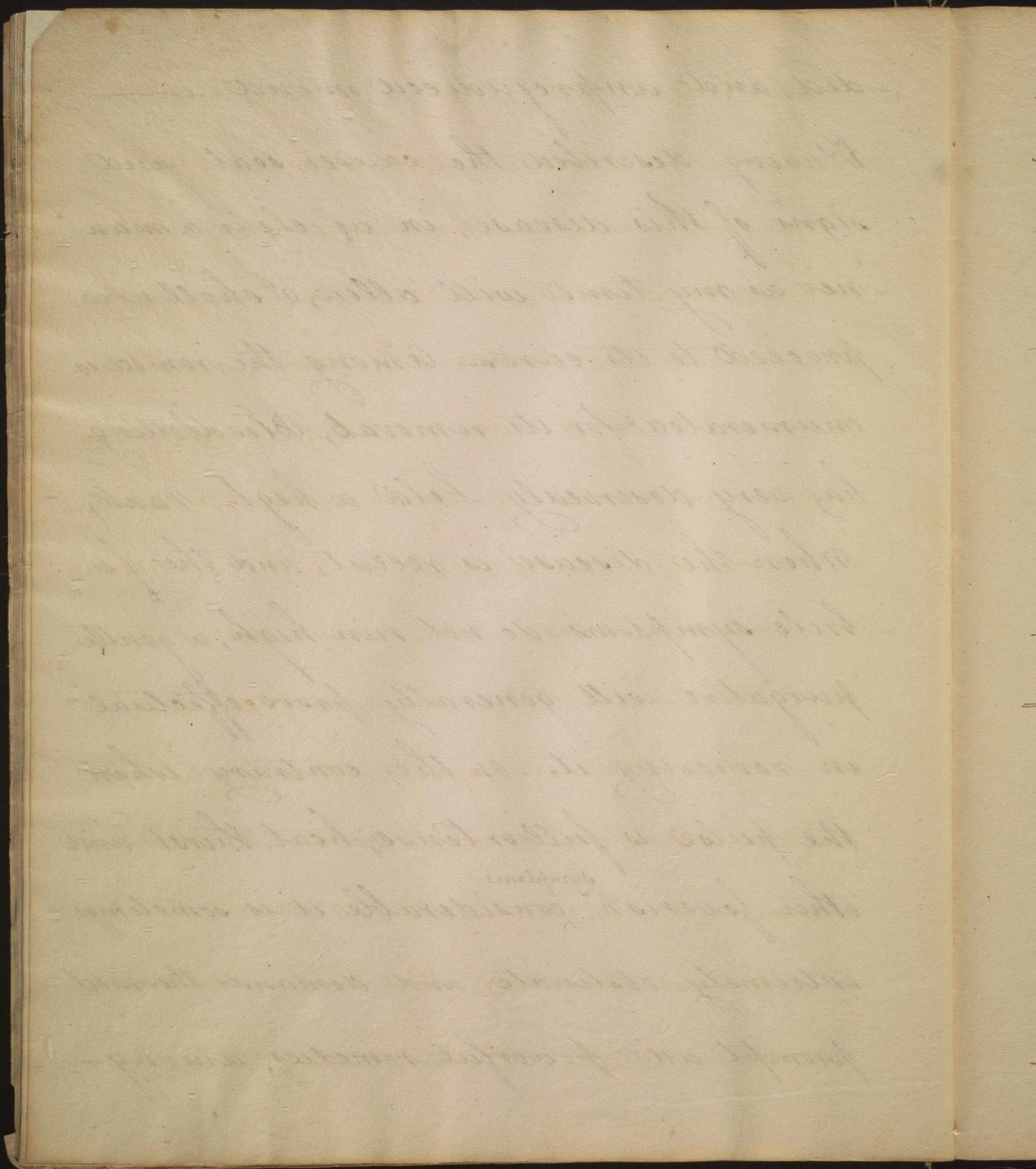
2000ft above sea level
in woodland and on the limestone
Caves & fissures often contain a
rich fauna of small land mammals &
birds especially in winter months.
Woodpeckers are common & frequent
in mixed woods & forest areas &
are found mainly in the lower &
middle elevations in limestone wood.
The smaller mammals are found
in the lower limestone areas &
the larger mammals with bears &
wolves & deer in the higher areas.

preternatural constriction of the colon, occa-
-sioning at the same time, those spas-
modic efforts which are felt in severe
gripping, and which efforts propagated
downwards to the rectum, occasion there,
the frequent mucous stools and tenesmus.
That a constriction does exist, I will not
pretend to deny; but that the Doctor
has mistaken the effect, for the cause,
will, I am sure, appear evident, when we
advert to the causes which act remotely
in producing the disease. - That the prox-
-imate cause consists in a morbid and
irregular action, in the bloodvessels of
the part, will appear clear to every can-

the first time off I have had since I
left home. I will write again when I
return in Sept. and another letter
will go out with my return. I am
now at the State Fair and have
had the pleasure of meeting many
old friends and acquaintances.
I will write again when I return.
I am sending you a copy of the
newspaper which I have just
received. It is the "Daily
Advertiser" of New Haven.

- did and unprejudiced mind.

Having described the causes, seat, and signs of this disease, in as clear a manner as my time will allow; I shall now proceed to its cure. Among the remedies enumerated for its removal; Bloodletting has very deservedly held a high rank, when the disease is recent, and the febrile symptoms do not run high; a gentle purgative will generally prove effectual in removing it. - on the contrary when the pulse is full or tense, heat, thirst and other feverish ^{symptoms} considerable, it is sometimes extremely obstinate, and demands the most prompt and powerful remedies; among

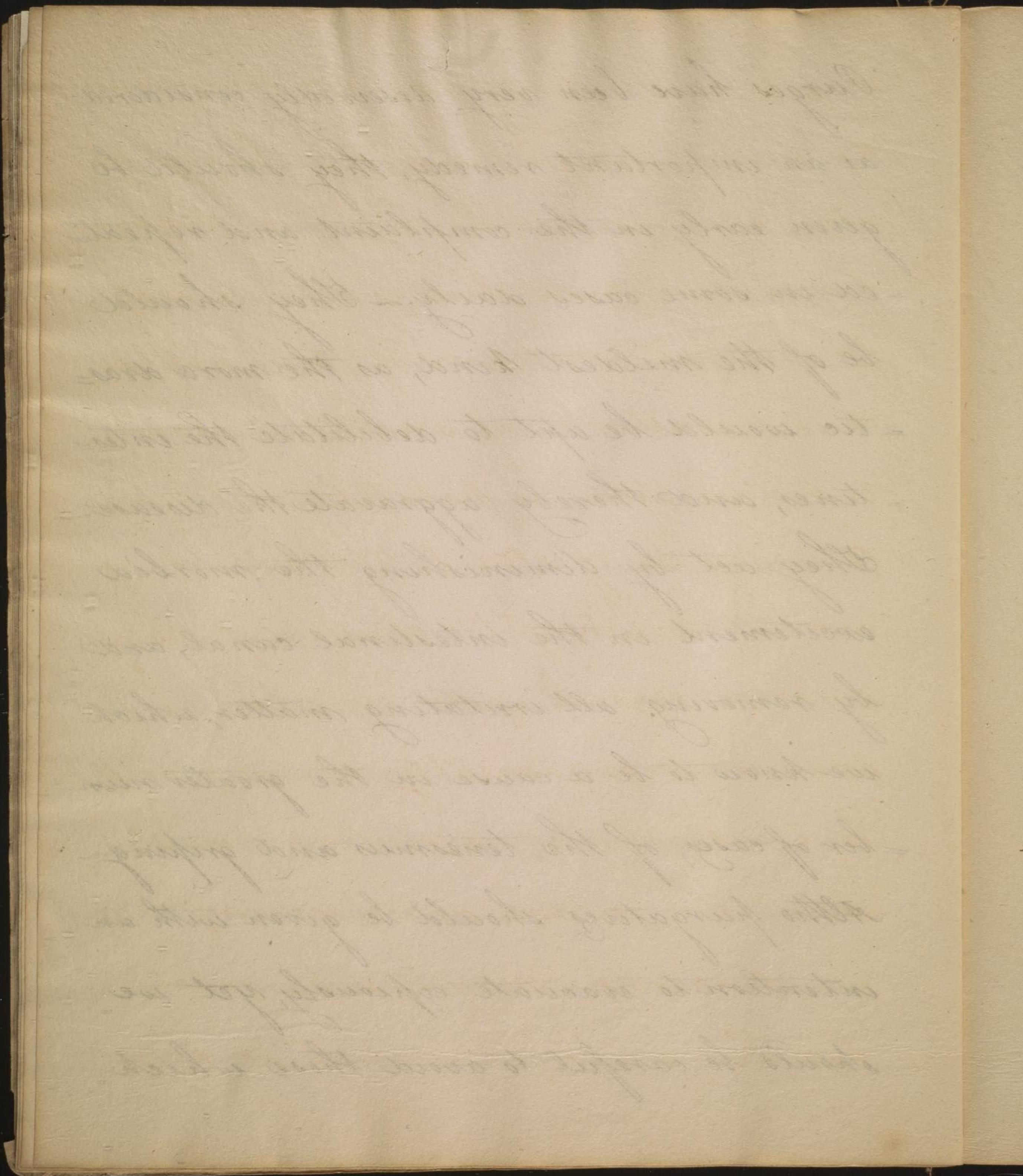


which bloodletting most assuredly stands highest, this should be regulated by the state of the system, and urgency of the case. We should continue it ^{as} long as the tension in the pulse, and pain in the bowels, shall demand. A depressed pulse, which we sometimes meet with in this disease, as in many others of inflammatory action; so far from bidding us to withhold the lancet, calls more loudly for its use. Emetics are generally of little service, except when there is considerable nausea, depending upon a redundancy of bile; in this case the tarterised antimony and ipecacuanha may be used.

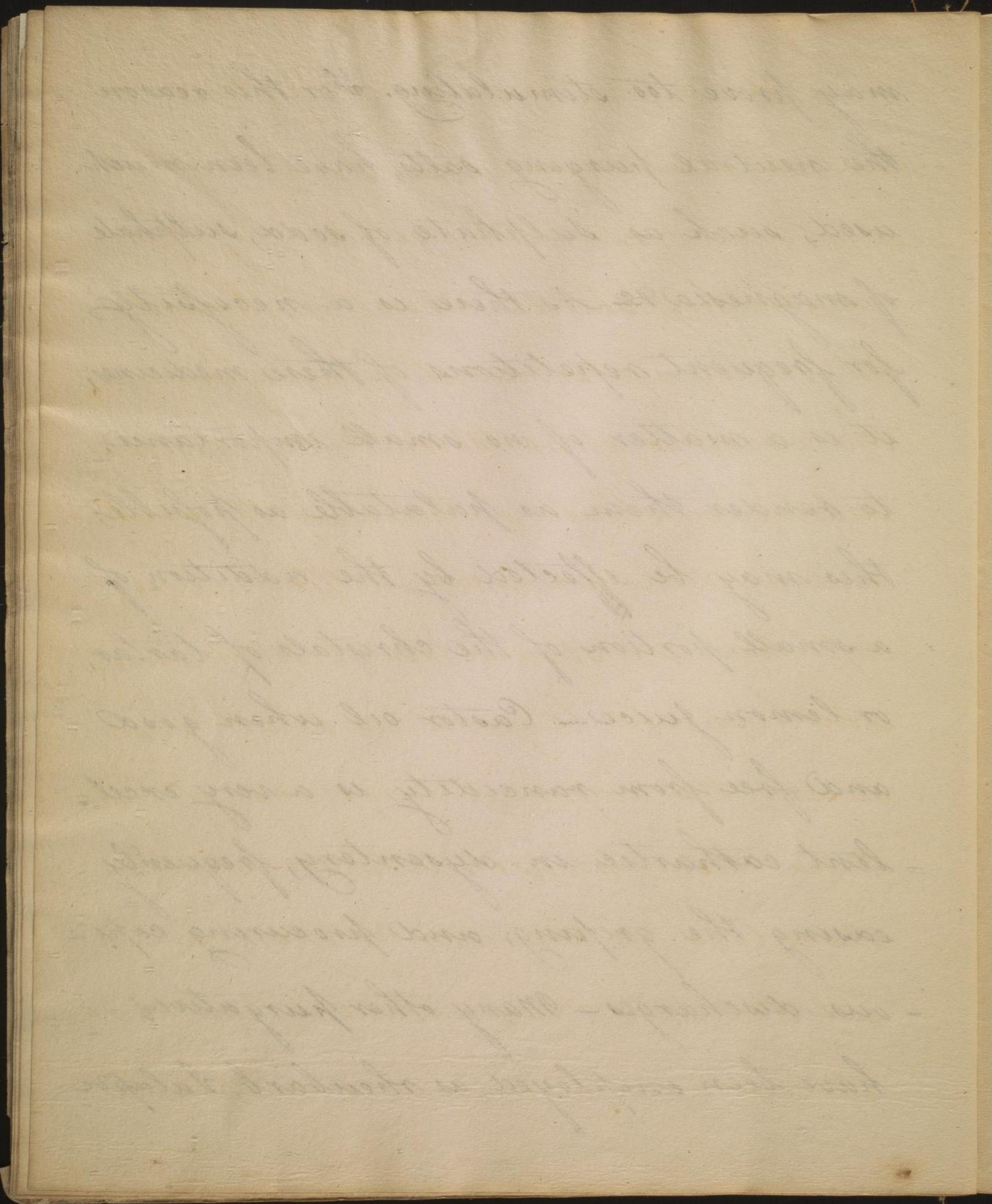
the first time I have ever seen a bird of this species.
I have seen it in the same place before but
never before have I seen it in the same place
so often. It is a small bird with a long tail
and a short beak. It has a black head and
breast, and a white belly. It is about
the size of a sparrow. It is very
active and is always flying around.
It is a very noisy bird and is
always singing. It is a very
common bird in this country.

Purges have been very deservedly considered as an important remedy, they should be given early in the complaint, and repeated in some cases daily. They should be of the mildest kind, as the more drastic would be apt to debilitate the intestines, and thereby aggravate the disease.

They act by diminishing the morbid excitement in the intestinal canal, and by removing all irritating matter, which we know to be a cause in the greater number of cases, of the tenesmus and griping. Altho purgatives should be given with an intention to evacuate copiously, yet we should be careful to avoid those which



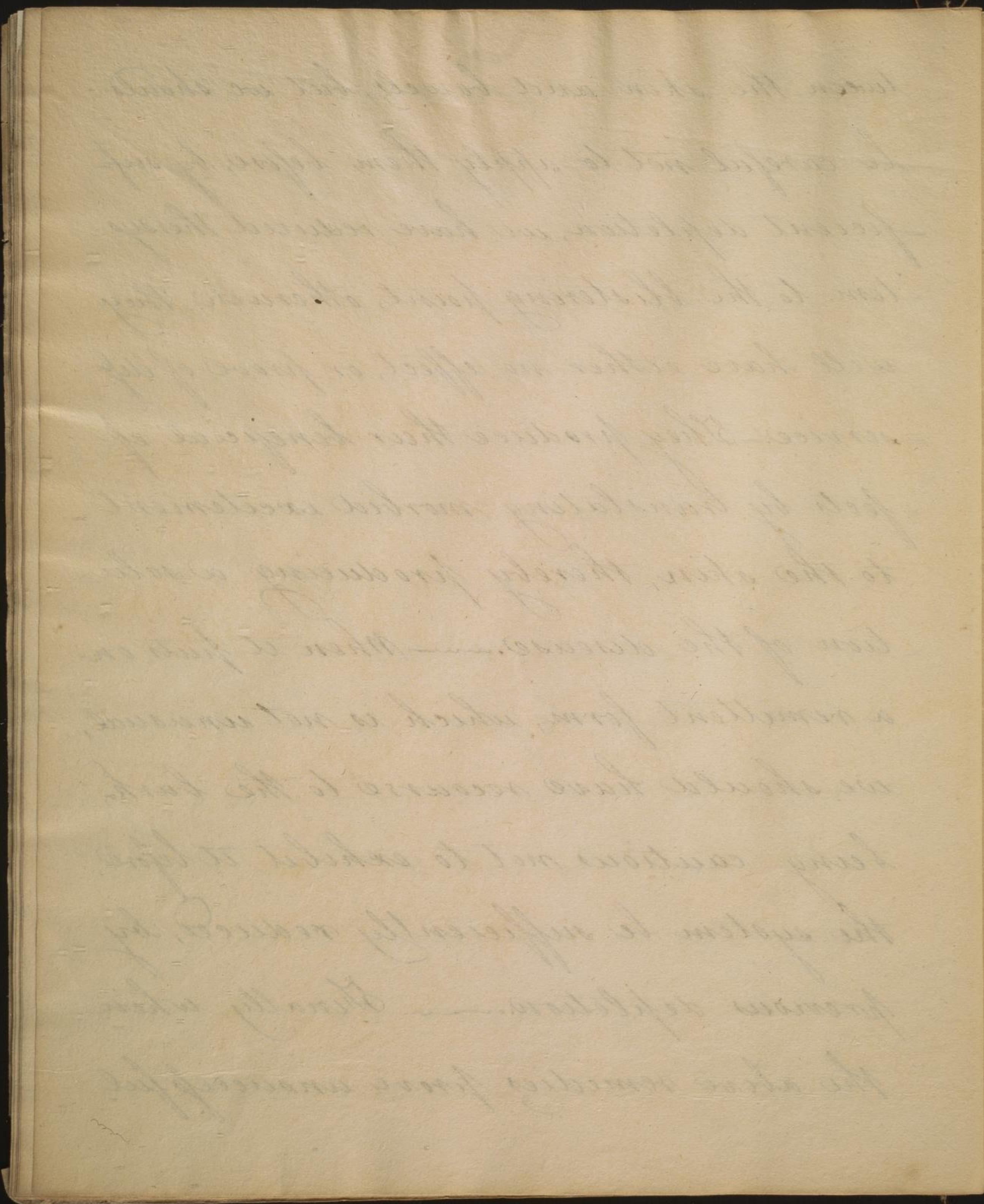
may prove too stimulating. For this reason
the neutral purging salts, have been much
used, such as, sulphate of soda, sulphate
of magnesia &c As there is a necessity
for frequent repetitions of these medicines,
it is a matter of no small importance,
to render them as palatable as possible;
this may be effected by the addition of
a small portion of the crystals of tartar,
or lemon juice. Castor oil when good
and free from rancidity is a very excel-
-lent cathartic in dysentery; frequently
easing the griping; and procuring copi-
-ous discharges.— Many other purgatives
have been employed, as rhubarb, Salapic



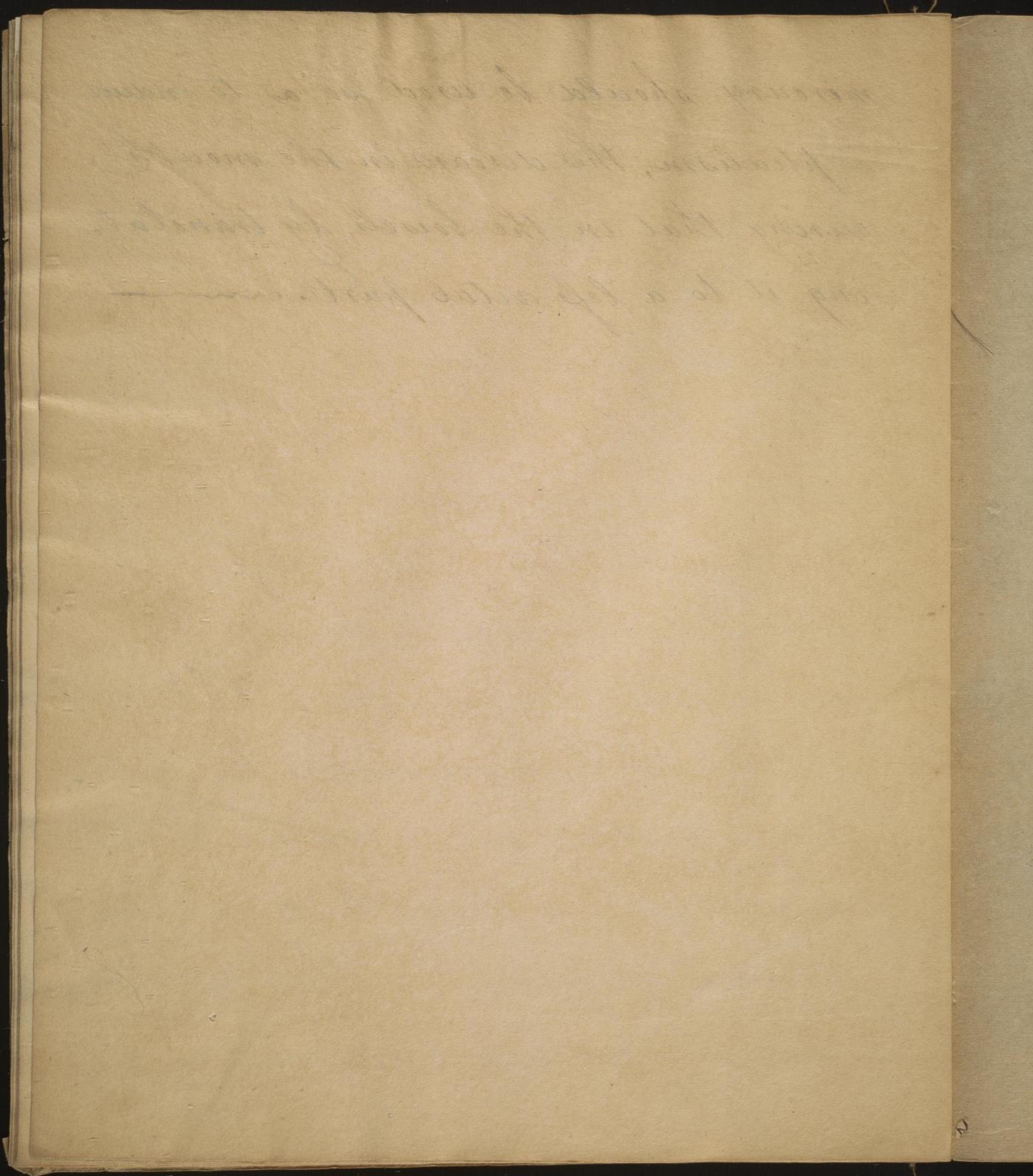
but I think them far inferior to those above enumerated. — Demulcents have been highly and deservedly extolled in this disease; they should consist of flaxseed tea, barley water, decoction or infusion of the shavings of hartshorn &c. — Mucilaginous substances should be taken by the mouth and injected per anum. — After sufficient depletion we should resort to opium, which should be given in small doses during the day, and large ones at night, it has been also used with considerable advantage in the form of enemas. —

Blisters have been used with wonderful advantage, from the intimate connection be-

tween the skin and bowels, but we should be careful not to apply them before, by sufficient depletion, we have reduced the system to the blistering point; otherwise they will have either no effect, or prove of service. They produce their beneficial effects by translating morbid excitement to the skin, thereby producing a solution of the disease. When it puts on a remittent form, which is not unusual, we should have recourse to the bark, being cautious not to exhibit it before the system be sufficiently reduced, by previous depletion. Finally when the above remedies prove unsuccessful



mercury should be used so as to induce
a ptyalism, the disease in the mouth
curing that in the bowels, by translat-
ing it to a less vital part.



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